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SUBJECT: DRC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RUNOFF: SITREP 10/27
1200

REF: A. KINSHASA 1664

1B. KINSHASA 1654

11. (U) Campaigning for the October 29 DRC vote ends October 27 at midnight. Voters will elect delegates to the new provincial assemblies, which will later elect senators and governors, but the race dominating the public eye is the second round presidential runoff between transitional President Joseph Kabila and Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba.

12. (U) Kinshasa, which turned out strong for Bemba in the first round, remains quiet with 12 hours left in the campaign. Various campaign demonstrations are drawing crowds in different parts of the city, but neither candidate has announced plans for public appearances. A rally planned by the MLC for this afternoon has fizzled out, with some party spokesmen citing security concerns. A televised debate between the two candidates originally scheduled for October 26 failed to materialize when the two sides could not reach agreement on format and ground rules (ref B).

13. (U) Embassy Kinshasa will be fielding more than 50 American and Congolese observers throughout Kinshasa polling stations, and in the Kinshasa compilation centers during the vote count. International observers plan to be out in force in the capital and throughout the country. The Carter Center has 45 observers in country, the European Union 300, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) 60, SADC-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) 80, the Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA) 50, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) 10, the African Union 50, and the South African Observer Mission (SAOM) 108. The South Africans -- including SADC, SADC-PF, and AU -- will also have special technical advisors present at all 64 compilation centers during the counting process.

14. (U) Other regions remain largely calm. Most election-related conflicts have resulted from confrontations between supporters of the two candidates at rallies or when one group removed or defaced the other's election materials. Sporadic election-related violence has been reported in Gbadolite, Equateur (ref B), which went strong for Bemba in the first round, and Lubumbashi (ref A), which Kabila carried by a wide margin.

15. (SBU) Weather may be a wild card in this round of voting. Much of the country is well into the rainy season, and downpours could reduce voter turnout in any number of areas. Many of the 50,000-plus voting booths are located in remote areas difficult to reach even during the dry season. Voting

materials in centers located in dilapidated buildings, temporary shelters, tents, or even in the open air will be extremely vulnerable to the weather on election day.

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